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ABSTRACT

The report summarizes proceedings of a roundtable conference on native language maintenance and literacy education for indigenous populations, particularly in North America. On the first day, a morning session consisted of a sharing of thoughts and experiences of what literacy is, its value and meaning, issues surrounding native language literacy, and participation in the conference. A list of resulting ideas is presented. The afternoon session involved presentations and a question-and-answer period by three educators on these topics: what is meant by literacy; the issues; and the role of native language and culture preservation. On the second morning, discussion moved to the approaches that work for native language literacy instruction, with examples of success stories. The afternoon session focused on research progress and research needs in this area. The final session addressed the implications of the previous discussions for policy formation and change. For each session, presenter comments and audience questions are summarized. A list of specific recommendations for action, developed by groups based on geographic origin, includes suggestions for curriculum development teacher preparation, interinstitutional and interorganizational collaboration, advocacy, policy development and implementation, funding, and use of available technology. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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NATIVE LITERACY AND LANGUAGE

ROUNDTABLE PROCEEDINGS

Edited by:

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Produced by:

The National Center on Adult Literacy
in collaboration with
The Native Education Initiative
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NCAL

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and
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PREFACE

The Native Literacy and Language Roundtable was held in Denver, Colorado May 5-7, 1994. A rich assortment of presentations and discussions occurred among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. This volume of conference proceedings has been developed in order to capture and disseminate the important issues, experiences, and ideas that were discussed at the roundtable.

BACKGROUND AND ORGANIZATION OF THE ROUNDTABLE

The Native Literacy and Language Roundtable was developed through a collaborative effort between the Regional Educational Laboratories and the National Center on Adult Literacy (NCAL). The Labs have been involved in a Native Education Initiative and have increasingly become concerned about literacy and educational issues among Native peoples. The National Center on Adult Literacy has been engaged in research and dissemination on a broad range of literacy issues, including such topics as participation in literacy programs, retention of literacy learning, second language learning, the application of technology to adult literacy learning, and family and workplace literacy.

The partnership between the Labs and (NCAL) to develop and conduct the Native Literacy and Language Roundtable was a natural collaboration, bringing together their interests, resources, and expertise in order to address this very important area.

THURSDAY, MAY 5, MORNING – TALKING CIRCLE

Roundtable attendees participated in a "talking circle", a custom of ... sharing thoughts and experiences. Each person had an opportunity to share his/her thoughts and experiences on what literacy is, its value and meaning, the issues surrounding Native language literacy, and thoughts on participating in this conference. The following comments capture the ideas that were shared:

- Literacy provides choices.
- Expectations of literacy—How does literacy help maintain Indian culture?
- Bottom line—people enjoy reading, especially legends.
- Literacy is much more than reading and writing; it is knowledge of the world.
- Important to help others help themselves via literacy.
- Need to use literacy as a tool for understanding culture and language and for promoting economic development.
- What is the relationship between oral and written language?
- Need to learn more about the meaning of literacy in Indian country; literacy is important to academic performance but it is not accepted as important by all groups.
- Develop literacy at an early age.
- Cultures all over the world are talking about promoting stories and legends, not necessarily reading and writing.
- Every culture has literacy definitions—learning how to read and write, to be active in the development of language, to promote

values, the development of the emotional side and a social conscience.

- Language should be learned at a young age.
- Use literacy to promote career opportunities.
- Need to teach values and attitudes.
- Communication—difficulties in bilingualism/multiculturalism.
- Protocol of communication styles and mores.
- Deficiencies in literacy, but whose literacy?
- Emergent literacy for families.
- Personal experience as a basis—Where "I" am in the literacy question.
- Diversity of context—to develop or not to develop, imbedded in different cultural context.
- Goals and processes of actions—studies, but with limited results.
- Starts in the families—What are survival skills? Families teach what is important for survival.
- Usage of language—utilization of learned language allows children to become firmly seated in their own literacy.
- Disenfranchised enhancement; relevance of language.
- Communicate across cultures, languages.
- Children's enriched experiences will provide leadership in the future.
- Adult education—experiences maintain language base.
- Family development; read to children, a cornerstone of life.
- Establishing information for legitimization; immersion in language.
- Skills for job, personal, and professional development, empowerment.
- Book making—reintroduce PIMA (native languages) into system.
- Survival skill development—What is real? Talking like a human being and not sounding like a book.
- Grassroots beginning—start with parents, immersion in day care centers.
- Confidence of kids using literacy as a means of success, validation.
- Curiosity of youth—beginning learning process either helps or hinders.

- Understanding place in this world helps us to come to grips with our interactions; prep school mentality—"What am I doing to my children?"
- Take research and transform through culture to make sense.
- Ripple effect—empowerment of 28,000 square miles of land with 100,000 kids (250,000 Navajos in reservation).
- Things are slipping away; "ray of hope"—consider *Schindler's List*.
- Define yourself; how people learn.
- Embarrassment—"Don't come to school."
- Sequencing—use naturalistic means, different ways of achieving.
- Efforts—Too little, too late?
- Schools do not save languages.
- Current lifestyle—marriage with the tube; transfer of family values and culture.
- Story book reading; what books are read in the home?
- For Utes, literacy is intertwined in religious beliefs that promote expression to creator.
- Protection of Indian people, who they are—can this be legislated by federal government like the Endangered Species Act?
- Hopelessness begets what?
- Main problem—get together curriculum materials that are acceptable to state, federal government, and others.
- Issues of communication and miscommunication across cultures.
- "Deficit theory" is alive and well.
- Local, regional, national, and international issues in literacy; include information in the national agenda—be involved at the conceptual level, ground level, and nurture to the end.

THURSDAY, MAY 5, AFTERNOON – NATIVE LITERACY

TOPICS:

- **Defining what we mean by literacy**
- **What are the issues?**
- **What is the role of Native language and culture preservation?**

PRESENTERS:

Reva Reyes, Co-Chair, American Indian Adult Education Association

Patricia Kwachka, Professor of Linguistics & Cross Cultural Communication, University of Alaska at Fairbanks

Tom Chee, Teacher/Counselor, Navajo Prep School, Farmington, NM

Reva Reyes:

European-style schooling has been associated with the loss of culture and language, raising the question, "What is the purpose of education?" Is it to make Indian people White, to interweave the instruction in skills with the removal of Indian peoples' values? That has been the case historically, beginning with schools provided by church groups and government policies of removing people from their lands, and continuing into the present with educational programs that do not support the maintenance of Indian languages and cultures. It is primarily those who have not had formal education who have been able to maintain their language, culture, and spirituality.

We might also ask the question: Why is there so much occupational focus in adult education when there are so few jobs on reservations? And, what difference does a GED diploma make to a young woman whose only job choice is to work at the chicken factory?

Reyes cited Paulo Freire's definition of "literacy"—the process of naming and renaming the world—as close to her own—a process of defining and redefining ourselves as Indian people, with all the cultural knowledge that this entails. For members of the audience who are Indian speakers, Reyes asked, "Can you think of things you can name in your own language that you can't say in English?" Language defines who we are and how we think, and that is a strong rationale for maintenance of Native languages.

Reyes offered a brief summary of the history of Indian education. When the Indian Education Act was passed, adult educators talked about models of schooling. Unfortunately, adult education was an add-on program, and it still is. Adult educators came to realize that they needed to ensure success for students. Negative incentives such as grades and formal tests should be avoided in favor of criterion-referenced checklists that recognize positive achievement. According to the first and only research project on Indian adult education, Indian teachers are needed. Those now teaching are not always certified, although they may work on formal credentials while teaching in an adult education program. They are role

models for the students. It is important to provide comfortable surroundings and to use informal leadership systems and families (who give critical support). Adult education programs have developed a great deal of leadership in communities. Much of what adult educators do is really community organizing. Reyes pointed to smaller research projects that showed that Head Start and adult education helped Indian people to go on and complete degrees and that GED students did as well as high school graduates.

More attention needs to be given to how culture and language can be reflected in adult education instruction. We need to help communities create opportunities to read and write on a daily basis in Native languages—through media, appropriate and sufficient variety of materials, and technology. Programs need to share materials with each other. Some programs, such as "The Write Way" (Reyes' own), are on diskettes and can be used as a framework or shell, with appropriate cultural detail replaced by each community that wants to use them. Teachers could share materials via technology. There won't ever be enough money to develop curriculum materials for all tribes, so we need new means and models of sharing such as this one.

Finally, Chapter 1 education programs should be rethought. Rather than focusing strictly on children who are at educational risk because of poverty, we might think of focusing on children who are at risk of losing their language and culture. Reyes introduced the term "culturally challenged" to mean that such children didn't get to learn Indian history, government, and so forth.

Reyes closed with her own definition of literacy—a process of defining and redefining ourselves, with all the cultural skills needed to help Indian nations become strong and to find individual roles to contribute.

Tom Chee:

Literacy is using a language at a high cognitive level, thinking at a high level. That is at the heart of the matter. It is looking at a problem, analyzing it, discussing it, and putting it back together—using language as a problem-solving tool. We may look at external credentials to validate someone's literacy, but this kind of language use is not necessarily associated with formal education. Rather, it is a lifelong process, a capacity to think and apply solutions to whatever challenge comes along. Chee has thought about members of his family who have been literate in this way, who used Navajo at a high cognitive level. His grandparents, who had little or no formal education, were literate. He mentioned that his grandfather had told him a metaphorical story on the occasion of his decision to get married. He has been "chewing on" that abstract, high-level story ever since.

Chee spoke of the importance of family and community as sources of wisdom, values, and insight into human behavior. In his own case, when he was still a young child, his father died. The community was concerned about his mother and her ten children and took the responsibility to approach a young man about marrying her. The young man accepted and became Tom's stepfather.

Community leadership is exercised in different ways. In Navajo communities, it is not always those who have official positions of political leadership who actually wield the power. One needs to know the community well and do a thorough assessment to understand where leadership lies. When we come in with

a program, we often run to the administration but forget to go to the real power in a community.

Chee mused on the family as an organization or institution and said he wondered whether he ought to sit down with his wife and children and together draw up a mission statement for the family—much as schools do. While Chee stressed his respect for his elders, he also remarked on the intuitive insights of children. In Navajo, the word for "child" is literally "one who smells you," one who knows your thoughts. Children "smell" what is going on with their parents, what is really true—no matter what they are told. Chee is a believer in the whole-community approach to literacy.

Whenever he reads a book, Chee finds himself asking who wrote it, when, for what purpose, for what audience, in what social and political context? People need to think for themselves and not let others decide for them what they need. It is wrong to come to a community with a program or idea and impose it on that community. Why put a cement slab on the floor of a hogan? People know what they need; they do not need others making assumptions about what they need.

How does Native literacy promote and maintain culture? Language is the heart and soul of the culture; it creates our world view. Any child is capable of learning languages. But it is possible to build bridges across cultures, to find common wisdom. For example, in the realm of work, environmental engineering is a profession that can be harmonious with Navajo culture, and at the same time bring badly needed skills to the reservation.

Coming back to the point of self-determination, Chee stressed that Native people need sovereignty—the right to make choices for themselves. They need to realize that they can do anything. Literacy needs to be useful to people. Adult learners learn only what is important to them. "I won't read a magazine on women's fashion, but give me *Western Horseman* or *Horse Psychology*, and I'm lost for the evening."

The ability to analyze our own thinking is part of literacy. We need to be able to step back from our thinking and say, "Aha! That's how I arrived at that conclusion." Speaking of how he spurred some students to think critically about movies and media depictions of Indians, he said that he asked them, "What does Hollywood do?" They were able to talk about the stereotyping, the images that movies project.

He reminded the audience that education is never neutral. There's always an agenda. What is our agenda with the adult education population?

Patricia Kwachka:

Patricia Kwachka introduced herself as a linguist who has worked with the Mississippi Band of Choctaws, the Mayas in Mexico and Guatemala, and Alaska Native communities. She noted that of approximately 20 Native languages of Eskimo and Athabaskan communities, only two of those languages are viable (meaning that they are still being spoken by children).

It is a truism that if you lose your language, you lose your culture; however, in the lower 48 states, there are many cultural communities that speak English but maintain distinct cultural practices. This is not to minimize the cultural effects of

language loss; it is more to suggest that the truism should not be taken as an absolute.

Kwachka offered two definitions of literacy. A simple definition is John Gumperz's, "the ability to participate in urban speech events." This definition equates literacy with dealing with Western institutions (filling out forms, applying for a job, writing grant proposals, using the library, negotiating business at the bank, etc.). Perhaps people who choose to avoid participating in these events should be considered "nonliterate" rather than "illiterate," a term that suggests one has tried and failed to master such skills. In fact, in the area of Alaska in which Kwachka works, there are few opportunities to use literacy on a regular basis in a job, and those who do not have such opportunities often simply get assistance with reading and writing tasks from others when necessary (e.g., from lawyers, doctors, accountants, or grant writers). People who work for government agencies, stores, schools, post offices, and so forth get exposed to such literacy. But for mothers, caregivers, construction workers, and farmers, literacy is often irrelevant. Literacy does not "happen" unless there is need or motivation to practice those skills.

Kwachka does not believe this is the optimal situation and asked why it persists. In cultures where the emphasis is on family and home, going away for an education is alienating and a sacrifice. If we want to help such people be literate, we need to help bring opportunities closer to home.

Kwachka addressed the question of whether Native language literacy is perpetuated by written literature. She mentioned that the Mississippi Band of Choctaw has thousands of pages of written Choctaw, beginning in the late 1800s, and that about 85% of Choctaw children maintain the language. In Oklahoma, the language is almost gone; only 20% of the people (and no children) are able to speak the language. Having the language written is no guarantee of language maintenance. There must be natural uses throughout the community. Uses cannot be limited to religious ceremonies alone, for example. However, having a language written may be beneficial by contributing to its credibility; there is an authority and legitimacy conveyed by print. And we should try to avoid "the twin treacheries of the orthography wars and wars over what constitutes sacred versus secular texts." These arguments interfere with a smooth process of developing a writing system and a body of written text.

Another definition of literacy might be, "being able to read and write with confidence." Kwachka raised the question of whether being literate in English could contribute to maintenance of a first language. She observed that first language patterns are often transferred to English. Even when syntactic patterns from the first language appear in writing in English, for example, when English is being manipulated to accomplish a Yup'ik world view, something of Yup'ik is maintained. She gave the example of Yup'ik particles that are translated into English and used to soften statements about the future, reflecting how Yup'ik speakers deplore braggadocio and claims about the future. She believes literacy in English can make a positive contribution. Kwachka closed by saying that we should encourage students to be biliterate and value their own writing style.

DISCUSSION:

Clarification centered on framing the question, "What are we educating our children for? For what purpose(s)? What kinds of changes take place as one becomes more 'educated'?"

A concern in common between Reyes and Kwachka was the following: How are we going to use technology to promote maintenance of languages and cultures? Materials, methods, and curricula in universities do not reflect our cultures. Culture is reflected in everything we do—in attitudes about not being better than others, in humor, in the simplest acts. We don't see ourselves reflected in mainstream education.

How can we avoid perpetuating an oppressive stance, having gone through an oppressive system? How can we learn from our experiences? Will the system let us do that? The larger society institutionalizes homogenization. We need new notions of what it is to be a teacher and a learner. Traditional values, attitudes, and methods need to be translated to new, contemporary settings. With regard to values and attitudes, what are good and enduring ones, and how can we carry them along? Cultural literacy should assist in enhancing Native empowerment for the 21st century.

Are we changing myths or perpetuating them? Where does it start or end? We need to change systems. Where does the power to change systems come from?

Someone suggested that Navajo Preparatory School was modeled on eastern prep schools, the kind of places where future leaders of society were schooled—by definition to perpetuate the status quo; but Tom Chee disagreed. It is different because it has an all-Navajo school board, Navajo staff and executive director; non-Navajos are hired only as needed. This is self-determination. It would be contradictory to put non-tribal members in decision-making roles. Tom asked, "When do we become civil, human beings and stop dancing around an issue?"

We need to find ways to become more self-sufficient, self-determining. People need to get an education and come back to the reservation/community, use that education in positive ways, and enforce and change laws. People are trying to strive for the best of both worlds, and the old people are counting on younger people to make these things happen.

What is the relationship between first-language literacy and second-language acquisition of literacy? How are bridges built? Chee responded that if you know who you are and maintain your world view, you can go through all the hoops of the dominant society and come back and reconnect. "There is a pull to go home, to be crammed in the congested public housing of Shiprock. Real education is to live for a cause, knowing your own world view. We need to live within the four sacred mountains, tie into the Navajo people." He and his wife chose to build near where they emerged (according to Navajo mythology) into the present world. His wife has a Ph.D. in bilingual education. The U.S. values letters after your name. That's not true in Navajo. You acquire standing through significant life events, such as getting married and having children. You really acquire standing when you have grandchildren. There is a lot of bridging of cultures, when you mentally shift, for example, from professional life to mutton and tortillas. There is a constant shifting, "double-clutching." Another element, long-term, deliberate planning, is contrary to Navajo training. You are braiding pieces of who you are with being a participant in the dominant society. The result is

something else; it varies with different people. Another comment: "It becomes easier with age to shift gears."

Question: *What is being done with literacy issues?*

Chee responded that they focus on the Navajo language serving a purpose; for example, in association with cultural activities such as lambing, and validating who one is as a Navajo youth. "We use Native American writers such as Silko. We don't force kids to read Shakespeare, but if someone's interested . . . " creating bridges between institutional uses of language and local needs.

Question: *I question the lack of acceptance of "educated" Native people who come back. Many are welcomed back. People work together.*

Kwachka responded that sometimes when teachers come back, it goes both ways. With some, there is resentment for those who try to "be better." She suggested this might be a gender issue, since it seems to happen more to women. She also clarified what she meant by "much of culture remains even with language loss."

Comment: *For those who maintain their language, they are more accepted back into the community.*

Comment: *If teachers don't come back and aggressively try to help preserve language and culture and change schools, they may be suspect, not accepted.*

Question: *Clarification requested of terms "illiterate," "nonliterate," and "choosing not to participate."*

Question: *What is the difference between loss of a culture and cultural change?*

Reyes responded that things may change, but still be distinct. To learn, you need positive self-concept. Students feel the loss of culture acutely.

Kwachka responded that with regard to literacy/nonliteracy, you can be more or less literate to the extent that you choose to. Illiteracy implies you can't, even though you've tried.

Comment: *I'm really struck with the idea of using media, technology . . . e.g., Nintendo . . . using characters from Indian cultural mythologies.*

Comment: *Some elders have given up on their language. They seem to think, "Why bring it back?" But we need their blessings to preserve our language.*

Reyes responded that we have lots of models, we know good ways to do things. What can we do? What about the centers, labs, Museum of the American Indian, and so forth? How do we change our systems? The majority of children are in public schools. What are we going to do with the adult education system?

FRIDAY, MAY 6, MORNING – PERSPECTIVES ON PRACTICE

TOPICS:

- What approaches are working?
- Examples of success stories

PRESENTERS:

Lynn Piwonski, Oneida Workplace Literacy Project, Milwaukee, WI

Meta Potts, Director, BIA Project, National Center for Family Literacy

Callistus Serphin Legdesog, Management and Support Administrator, Yap State Department of Education

Lynn Piwonski:

Lynn Piwonski described the workplace literacy program administered through the Oneida Retail Division by the Oneida tribe. The project worked to identify the skills demanded by the contemporary workplace and recognized the need for a much greater emphasis on computer skills. Needs assessments of individuals' skill levels are followed by individualized instruction, scheduled around the individual's work schedule, as work begins immediately, in complement to the training.

Participants in the program are encouraged to do more than just "get a job"; they participate in long-term career planning and goal setting and are encouraged to continue their education. Development of self-esteem as well as job skills is stressed. Support, encouragement, and recognition, from both teachers and peers, is an important aspect of the program. Students have identified mentors. A periodic newsletter provides publicity about the program in the local community. Crucial to the success of the program is gaining the support and buy-in of the community and tribal elders.

Meta Potts:

Meta Potts described the Family and Child Education (FACE) Program, a BIA program administered by the National Center for Family Literacy. This program is a combination of two national organizations, Parents as Teachers and PACE, forming FACE. Started in 1991 at 5 sites, the program now has 34 sites across the country.

The FACE model is based on four tenets: a strength (vs. deficit) approach, community collaboration, flexibility to site, and culturally appropriate—academically, culturally, spiritually, and socially. The home/school/community partnership utilizes home visits, screening, parent meetings, and community collaboration. Instruction is learner-centered and is both individual and group-oriented. Instructional components include adult education, parent education, early childhood education, and intergenerational education.

The program incorporates literacy skills into the teaching of parenting and crafts. Language activity includes both English and Native cultural content as well as other academic areas. In her slide show of several FACE sites, Dr. Potts

illustrated the kinds of materials, activities, and parent participation typical of the program. Although the environments depicted look much like a typical non-Indian preschool, many of the activities shown were culturally linked in some way.

Callistus Legdesog:

Callistus Legdesog provided a useful geographic perspective for the group, describing Micronesia with a geographical spread equal to that of the United States, but with a land mass equal to that of Rhode Island. 1963 brought the end of enforced isolation, after a past dominated by the Germans, Spaniards, and Japanese. At this time, several of the islands have full access to U.S. educational resources, yet the trend is toward dwindling resources.

The islands can be divided into three groups. In the farthest out, nearly all the people speak the indigenous languages, yet few written materials are available in those languages. In the second level environment, the native language is used primarily for oral communication, but English and Japanese are the languages used for most written communication; they are the government language. In the third environment, the cities, families often speak exclusively in English.

The shift from isolation to contact with explorers and missionaries has brought with it a shift from oracy to literacy, and gradually a shift from Native languages to English. Only since the 1980s has there been an effort to encourage the Native languages—with the development of Native language dictionaries, grammatical texts, and the training of bilingual teachers. Recently more widespread local policies have encouraged the teaching of local language and culture. But still literacy continues to be driven by economic forces. It is essential that students be prepared to live in both worlds, combining the best of the old and the new, becoming biliterate in both languages and cultures. Legdesog's presentation highlighted sociocultural, historical, and educational experiences quite parallel to those of mainland Indian tribes.

DISCUSSION:

Discussion centered on the following questions:

- What was the role of the college in the Oneida workplace project?
- How is self-esteem assessed in the family literacy programs?
- How is program success measured?
- What is the role of the fathers?
- How do programs build upon child rearing practices?
- How are children who come from substance abuse situations handled?
- Is there a concern about the loss or potential loss of Micronesian languages?
- What are the steps to counter this?
- How do you mandate private schools to teach languages?
- Can material be developed to meet the diverse needs of the total community?
- What are the cultural climate/themes in schools?

FRIDAY, MAY 6, AFTERNOON – PERSPECTIVES ON RESEARCH

TOPICS:

- **What research has been done and what does it tell us?**
- **What research is needed?**

PRESENTERS:

Stephen Reder, Director, Literacy, Language, & Communication Program, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Richard Littlebear, Director, Multifunctional Resource Center, Alaska

John Oller, Professor of Linguistics, University of New Mexico

Edna MacLean, Stanford University

Stephen Reder:

The relationships between language, schooling, and cultural identity are significant. Reder wrote a paper with Karen Green Wikelund that was an ethnohistorical study of literacy development in Alaska. The paper discussed ways in which literacy was multiply situated in the lives of the study participants (i.e., through school, church, the company store, the fishing economy, etc.). In other words, the Alaska native participants in the study had multiple literacies. While all of these literacies are important, the literacy associated with schooling was the focus of this earlier paper as well as of Reder's presentation.

Reder presented data from the recent National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics. There was a sophisticated sample of 25,000 adults, with rich background information from in-home interviews and an assessment segment. The study used simulated tasks based on real-life literacy behaviors to evaluate document, prose, and quantitative literacy skills.

A series of graphs was shown that documented the following:

1. Employment by education and literacy
   - As literacy level increased, so did worker employment in past year.
   - As literacy level increased, so did level of education.
2. Annual earnings by education and literacy
   - With no credential, literacy makes no difference.
   - With high credentials, the effects of literacy are accelerated.

3. Poverty by education and literacy

- Literacy level x highest credential.
- Low literacy and education = poverty (e.g., house size and family income).
- Effect of this literacy at every level of education is strong.

4. Voting by education and literacy

- Affected by both variables in same way.
- Suggests level of participation in larger society.

5. Intergenerational participation

- Parents' level of education strongest of educational influences.
- Kid's level of education strong influence as well.

Minority Issues. Many variables are relevant to determining who gets to participate in the mainstream. We have made progress in closing educational gaps (equity focus, HS grad, college entry, credentials, etc.), but we have not narrowed the gap between literacy scores of mainstream and minority members at each level of education. Literacy levels are not the same for all people even with the same education. For example, the literacy level achieved by mainstream persons with HS credentials equals the level of literacy attained by persons of color after four years of college. We must think about what this means for employment and literacy-related activities such as voting. We must find ways to make equal inputs foster equal outcomes.

Native Americans. Same effects exist as with other minority groups, even though there are unique and special circumstances with regard to schooling. Still, we must consider that Native Americans were undersampled (there were deliberate attempts to oversample Blacks and Hispanics).

Equity Alert. Some implications:

- Minority groups are at risk in the transition from credential-based to competency-based education and employment (e.g., Oregon's CIM & CAM; SCANS model).
- Educational reform must be based not only on new skills standards, but also on eliminating inequities in learner outcomes.
- Future surveys and assessments of literacy (and other learner outcomes) should be designed to advance our understanding of and ability to address persistent inequities, rather than to merely measure them with greater precision.

The *human capital* model must broaden to the *human* model. We must broaden our notion of *success*. Schools function as sorting systems. The literacy sort is more profound, and there is no tool to neutralize the literacy sort. We need leverage to change these patterns, to restructure so that these relationships change.

Richard Littlebear:

Literacy, for Littlebear, means being literate in both Cheyenne and English and applying this knowledge on a practical basis. Many issues that are not quantifiable go into learning our language. Abstract issues need to be addressed as well (e.g., self-esteem on individual and cultural bases leads to academic achievement for Native students).

A vision for Cheyenne literacy includes needing to set an agenda. This is an important group here (at the roundtable) because we need to be proactive in saving our languages. There has been a major shift in the policy of the U.S. government with the Native American Languages Act. It should be funded at a higher level, but it is a step in the right direction. We must not rely on this exclusively. We should just speak our languages everyday, everywhere. We don't need technology to solve the problem. We do need high tech to archive information/language, to build curricula, lesson plans, and so forth. But at the outset, investing in a lot of technology, practically speaking, puts a strain on already crunched budgets.

Sorting and classifying has been the approach to research on Native languages. This approach does not help the family learn to speak the language. It may be good for linguists, but we need something practical to apply. We should research L2 acquisition—it should be known by teachers teaching kids. If teachers don't know about bilingualism and other related issues, they can't help the kids. This must be part of teacher education. Kids won't know content if they don't know the language. We assume that because kids come in speaking English, they know it. Perhaps it is *survival* English, but it is not academic English.

There is a renewed interest in learning styles. There is merit in characterizing the differences between the prevalent culture (it is everywhere) and Native culture. There are definite differences, that is, the need to be aware of disciplinary means at home, circular versus linear frameworks. But beware of laundry lists and stereotypes. We need to look at teaching styles. Native Americans recognize curriculum development as a powerful instrument of cultural input.

Research provides us with comparisons with European languages only. Rather, we need to see the implications of differences among languages for how they are taught, since the structure of Native languages differs from European. The Total Physical Response (TPR) approach replicates for L2 learners how we learn L1. This highly effective method couples vocabulary with kinesthetics, embedded in the language. Littlebear first used the grammar-based method of instruction. This was the way he was taught, but it didn't work, so he moved to TPR, which works better. In a block of 22 hours, his students communicated rudimentarily in Cheyenne, could give commands, understand each other, and they also had fun. They didn't have to depend on the blackboard, pencil and paper, and so forth. He wants kids to learn mouth to ear, although it took a while to wean them. James Asher (San Diego State) has perfected this method.

What research is needed? We need to know what kids want. We assume what they need. Maybe they don't want to speak the language or save the culture. We must also research the knowledge of elders better. We should consider including sacred texts in curriculum. In Cheyenne, only certain people can speak about

these things. Not everyone can offer prayer—the speaker must have "done something."

Orthography—there are five bands of Cheyenne and five dialects. This is a solvable problem, however. If we are to gripe, we should gripe about textbooks from California, Texas, or Englewood Cliffs, but not about something that is Cheyenne produced. Maybe it doesn't fit with the way grandmother talked, but at least it's Cheyenne produced.

John Oller:

At the outset, Oller stated that he had learned a lot from the group, gaining understanding of literacy and education from the perspective of Native people. He intended to present new thoughts on research against the tide of research and change.

Oller wanted to discuss literacy at the abstract level—the level of thought, comprehension, and understanding. The full breadth of the concept of literacy includes the concrete, but it is the abstract thinking that gets at what literacy really means.

Language teachers use stories by putting up pictures and saying, "Tell me the story. Is anything significant happening?" Storytelling with the extended family provides ways to the literacy that we seek. Oller recounted ways in which the storytelling and his own family experience have been important for him.

Research shows that stories work as teaching devices (e.g., his work in northern Thailand). The Big Book approach works. When we tell a story, we achieve cognitive momentum that doesn't happen when one writes something on the board. People want to be participants, bring in their experience, and become engaged. This can produce a real learning experience.

Oller discussed ways of connecting facts with representations. He compared the "true story," "fictional story," and "deliberate lie" configurations. We often teach using fiction, but this is not really appropriate because the facts aren't there. The meaning and formal correspondence thus degenerates. The deliberate lie is a poor basis for making meaning. In regard to a study on Arab versus U.S. versions of a text, materials conforming to expectations were better than material never seen before in the Native language.

True narrative representations are better for learning to take place. Where there are a storyline and connections, more and faster learning results. With episodic organization of materials, there are real results. If episodes make sense to a particular culture, the results are even greater. Attendance improved (see Teaching All the Children to Read). Readers effectively tuned up—it works!

Episodic organization in English has been misused in schools. In classrooms, information is often presented that is not only fictional, but actually nonsensical. There should be a logical development of themes—themes that happened and are meaningful. The real-life experience of students should be used if the choice is to use drama; there is then rich cultural information to rely on, a rich index of information.

Key elements in working out the details of using literature of any type include (a) cognitive momentum; (b) getting to know who the characters are, what they'll

do next, and so on; (c) bringing one's own experience into the language; (d) the learning becoming part of one's own personal experience; (e) making the speaker part of the picture; (f) the facts of experience versus Chomsky's pure language; and (g) the essential elements of discourse.

Edna MacLean:

Edna MacLean reported being struck by the literature on literacy and the way in which it addresses minority peoples. The language used to describe the context appeared to be "us versus them," making her not want to continue reading. She began language-analysis of Inupiaq stories. Here she could still address language and culture and the interaction of language, culture, and language use within school culture. Every Native American can succeed in schooling, given a nurturing cultural, linguistic, and social environment. Teacher attitudes toward languages and culture need to change. Although Native cultures did not all develop writing systems, the sequenced, integrated, and sophisticated thought used in their oracy equals that of written texts.

Some of the literature argues that minority kids do poorly because they come from an oral culture, which ultimately means they do poorly because of who they are. To see this in print is really too much! More recent work ties to stories, explanation of narratives in different cultures, and how this applies to the schooling process.

Literacy theorists were led astray on the orality and literacy paradigm. Cultural groups who use oral strategies in their conversational styles are highly literate and do well in school; orality does not preclude literacy.

The definition of literacy needs to expand to include a self-preservation attitude. Children cannot function well if definitions of the culture in which they are interacting are negative (e.g., illiterate, aboriginal, etc.). Such an atmosphere is not conducive to learning or self-esteem building.

The atmosphere of schools tends to be acculturationist, assimilationist rather than pluralistic. Folks want a monoculture and need to address this issue to ensure equity in school. Ethnicity, culture, and language must be considered in needs assessments because there will be more problems as the population becomes more diverse. For example, the dialogue developed through this conference is important. The culture that controls the resources that go into schooling must take into consideration other language cultures.

Schooling, literacy, and culture interact. An important difference between cultures is the way they react to different forces. Competition and individualism affect the way the classroom is set up, for example, see McDermott's work, where certain cultural categories are developed and some portion of the class must fail. We need to think about our schooling situation—does anyone need to fail? By contrast, in the Kwakiutl culture, the whole group did the assignment together, cooperatively (H. Wolcott). There is cooperation, and no one fails in that culture. We need to incorporate cooperation and interacting with one another into our schools and achieve certain things as people of the United States.

Language needs to be viewed as a tool for constructing reality—a tool to form relationships/reactions. When Native peoples were introduced to schooling to learn reading and writing in English, havoc occurred. They were not allowed to use their own language, to create meaning as they learned. MacLean commented

on the stupidity of such a process. If Western culture is so knowledgeable, why use this method to teach Native people? A society that thought of itself as being at the highest level of evolutionary culture, with a self-perceived superiority of language, ways of doing things, and religion, demonstrated teaching approaches that were destructive and ineffective. The construction of reality through these attitudes and the realization of those attitudes through words created a negative attitude toward literacy. We need a new definition of literacy to change this.

Research shows four key areas that are proven predictors of academic achievement for minority students and need to be addressed: (a) incorporation of culture and linguistic heritage into the school, (b) involvement of parents/community in the operation of a school, (c) the pedagogical stance of teachers, and (d) how the cultural capital of students is incorporated in the development of students.

Teacher training programs that use Native knowledge are badly needed. The biggest task is to prepare materials for school and teacher training programs. Materials should be selected by a committee of elders. Cultural activities should be included to illustrate points and events of spiritual and linguistic importance.

MacLean is contributing to this by developing expertise in the analysis of Inupiaq stories—to explain Inupiaq stories to herself and to put words on paper, Inupiaq to English, and to explain the stories to the non-Inupiaq speaker. There are several levels of analysis—true to the words versus bringing her own interpretation—something we must keep in mind as any of us provides translations and explanations of our stories, especially when our materials are used in schools. But we expect kids' performances to improve. Teachers need materials and help, and we must get started.

SATURDAY, MAY 7, MORNING – IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

TOPICS:

- **What are current policies?**
- **What needs to be changed?**
- **What are next steps?**

PRESENTERS:

William G. Demmert, Jr., Professor of Anthropology, Western Washington University

Sandra Fox, Branch Chief, Monitoring & Evaluation, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Joe Quetone, Chair, Florida Governor's Council on Indian Affairs

William Demmert:

William Demmert provided the group with a brief history of Indian education, which included an explanation of how the Indian Education Act of 1972 and subsequent legislation, such as the Native Language Act of 1992, have supported the preservation and maintenance of Native language and culture.

He reviewed what we as Native educators can do. Suggested items are as follows:

- Help clarify the roles of public/private/BIA schools in implementing culturally appropriate instruction—storytelling, demonstration, practice, observation, dramatization, dancing, etc.
- Stress the importance of local knowledge and skills.
- Identify partners—parents/business.

Deterrents to implementation of a major movement to support Native literacy, language, and culture in the schools were identified.

- Past negative schooling experiences of leaders and elders affect their perceptions and result in a lack of initiative on the issues. Many had originally wrongly believed that focusing on the first language deters knowledge of English and success in schools.
- Some leaders are waiting for special funding before acting.
- There is a lack of trained teachers and appropriate curricula.

There are monies available to plan and implement Native language and culture programs, which must be a part of education.

- The Snyder Act, Johnson Act, and Native American Language Acts all include monies to promote Native language and culture.

- The Bilingual Education Act, if amended, could provide funds, as could Title 1.
- We also should take advantage of the opportunity provided by Goals 2000 for building responsive systems.
- Need to recognize existing innovative efforts that support the cause of Native language, literacy, and culture (e.g., Bethel Alaska School, Punalea Hawaiian School, University of Alaska, and others).

Sandra Fox:

Sandra Fox asked what has deterred us from implementing a major movement in language and literacy for Native American children? Why have we often implemented harmful actions? She suggested that the excuses are in our history and in our national policies. They include the following:

- The concept of cooperative schools where Native children attended public schools to mix with White students to become "civilized." The result was a polarization of the mixed bloods versus traditionals. The mixed bloods blended with the Whites and were integrated into sports, academics, and so forth, and they succeeded. The Indian students were left out.
- The implementation of programs like Chapter 1 for disadvantaged students used the deficit approach in which students were diagnosed, assessed, and remediated. This approach used such direct teaching models as Distar that sought to eradicate Indian English. The literature showed that this approach was not recommended for Native American students. It created excessive paperwork and isolated instruction.
- Lack of money. This will always be an excuse. We will always worry about funds for training and building strong leadership, but we can improve.

She questioned why we have allowed this to happen and suggested the following reasons:

- For money—often implementation of new programs meant jobs.
- We may still not feel good enough about ourselves as Indians and may still believe that "White is right."

New national policy is now in place to support implementation of appropriate programming and policies for Native American students. Excuses are being removed under the new Goals 2000. There are at least eight other good things happening:

1. National standards include language arts standards in which special attention is to be given to children with language differences, and in which each child shall learn two languages.

2. The Bilingual Education Act is being amended. Now is the time to lobby for specifically addressing Native language and promoting local control of schools.

3. Early Childhood Education is addressing early intervention and the inclusion of Native language and developmentally appropriate instruction.

4. There is a de-emphasis on standardized testing.

5. There is a movement toward a natural approach to teaching language and to instruction in the home language of the child.

6. There is an emphasis on parental involvement.

7. The groundwork has been laid for National Indian Education standards/curriculum.

8. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Plan includes policies related to school reform and the maintenance of language and culture.

Joe Quetone:

We should work on behalf of the communities we serve. Literacy is the ability to read and understand instructions, the survival skills necessary to provide for one's family. Communities should view literacy as a means to survival in any environment.

Policy applies to every tribal group. It is essential not to be a victim and allow others to "do things *to* you." When you turn over power, you accept oppression. We must refuse to be oppressed, and remember that nobody "allows" you to do anything.

We need to be aware of and very careful of defining what is culturally appropriate and relevant and remember that culture is different even between tribes. We need to define the common threads and relevancies and be aware that school could be teaching inappropriate Native culture or giving misinformation.

Parents have the responsibility of teaching and transmitting culture to their children. It is not the role of the school or any other system. Don't ask schools or other institutions to be responsible, and don't blame them for what is lacking. It is the responsibility of the home/family to develop good tribal members.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Groups based on geographic origin developed recommendations for future action. These recommendations have been broken down into the following categories:

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT:

- Document successes of culturally appropriate language programs, any achievements, explain what and how done, steps taken, and so forth.
- Disseminate locally adapted assessment procedures to literacy programs.
- Provide information and support promoting community Native language use and learning.
- Consider intergenerational school districts.
- Develop more language curriculum materials using community input.
- Focus on comprehensive programs, preschool, K-12, adult.
- Focus on natural environments/methods.
- Draw on existing good policies and practices, and circulate existing policies, connect with tribal education departments (labs can help do this).
- Support development of media in Native languages—community-controlled and cultural activities of daily life that include a language reality outside of school.
- Consider cross-group comparisons; curriculum should be localized, reflect community values, especially elders.
- Promote Native languages in adult education, that is, reading/writing/speaking.
- Include higher education in the process.
- Using appropriate pedagogies that work and reflect the true Native culture.
- Include the arts as an important vehicle for maintaining languages.

TEACHER PREPARATION:

- Promote and retain programs for Native American teachers.
- Assist in providing policymakers with information to recognize the need for certified experts in Native language/literacy.
- Encourage and hire more Native teachers in the classroom.
- For nonnative teachers—more orientation and awareness and education about the culture in which they are working.

- Better teacher training:
  - knowledge of Native culture.
  - methods, learning styles, and teaching styles.
  - evaluate teacher training programs.
  - meet Goals 2000 (Indian).

COLLABORATION:

- Increase networking and coordination among existing organizations; consider what the business community could be asked to do and the different agencies that might be involved.
- Develop more partnerships with business.
- Acknowledge and work out accommodations between competing interests of states and Native communities; involve all the Native communities on issues.
- Promote interagency collaboration among tribes, higher education, Interface, the regional educational labs, the Indian Education Technical Assistance Centers (IETAC), schools (pre-K to higher educational levels), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), State Education Associations (SEAs), and Indian Health Service (IHS).
- Promote community support of schools; community/school partnerships.
- Provide collaborative, ongoing interagency technical assistance with language programs (networks).
- Link with multicultural education to improve programs.
- Share across agencies and groups descriptions and explanations in detail of successful programs; feed to higher education curriculum from preschool through adult education.
- Go beyond region; work with Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA).
- At the federal level, establish partnerships between and among the following: tribes and states, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), U.S. Department of Education (USDOE), National Indian Education Association (NIEA), National Education Association (NEA), National Indian School Boards Association (NISBA), National Indian Adult Education Association (NIAEA), American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), American Indian Science & Engineering Society (AISES), and regional educational laboratories (RELs).
- Link with tribal colleges; support their efforts versus outside pressures to form programs appropriately, as they know are needed.
- Conduct a regional meeting—get Job Training Partnership Act Programs (JTPA) and others to promote Native literacy.

- Continue dialogue through national meetings, link with OBEMLA, National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE), and NIEA.

ADVOCACY:

- Advocate based on correct information and research.
- Support National Indian Education Goals 2000.
- Know the tribes' goals for education.
- Make sure that assessment tests are culturally sensitive and supported by the community.
- Tribes should take the lead role.
- Communicate with decision makers.
- Foster local research; bring intuitive knowledge to consciousness.
- Provide better input in regard to mechanisms for implementation from grassroots level to policy level.
- Examine the purpose of schools and schooling.
- Teach and demonstrate understanding.
- Establish community committees as a vehicle to explain legislation and its implications.
- Educate the administrators, legislators, teachers, parents, and others about the crucial need for comprehensible input in order for education to succeed.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION:

- Develop legislation for charter schools and magnet schools, for example, Denver has six focus schools.
- Establish national priorities, with policies and programs for BIA, USDOE, and other national organizations.
- Focus on specific legislation, for example, Bilingual Education Act, ESEA, Adult Education Act, Vocational Education Act, and Americans with Disabilities Act.
- We need to work to change nonfunctional systems, such as day care operating criteria and elders who can't be paid because it affects their social security payments.
- Bring mainstream systems more in line with traditional needs.

FUNDING:

- Adult education is least funded and is in competition with Indian education funds.
- Need formula funding for every Indian adult who wants or needs literacy instruction in their Native language or in English.

- States have stretched funds too far—too many bad programs (underfunded).
- Harness existing resources (e.g., the Multifunctional Resource Centers (MRC), Evaluation Assistance Centers (EAC), & RELs).
- Pay personnel to go to school to enhance job skills. Administrative leave provision should also apply to parents—in Wisconsin four hours per month.

TECHNOLOGY:

- Collect curricula and materials via ERIC on Internet, other electronic means.
- Use electronic bulletin boards to counter endangered languages.
- Promote use of satellite technology, and so on (labs can help).